

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1870.

Subject: Spiritual Blindness.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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THE SUBJECTS OF VOL. III. THUS FAR PUBLISHED ARE

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SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."—2. Cor. IV. 3, 4.

Sight belongs, in the first instance, to the bodily organization; and yet, very early, and among all nations, the phraseology is transferred to the operations of the mind, instead of the eye; and men are said to see, or not to see, mentally. A corresponding change was also made in the medium of sight. The truth was called *light*, and falsity was called *darkness*. The whole imagery of the eye, and the whole process of perception, has been spiritualized. It scarcely seems to have been transferred. We have become so used to it, that it is no longer a figure in any sense. We speak with the same familiarity of a man's seeing a thought or an argument, as we do of his seeing a mountain or a bird. And we speak of truth so familiarly as *the light* that no man stops to think whether I say, "The *light* of this matter;" or, "The *truth* of this matter." Either phrase, even by a child, would be perfectly well understood.

The apostle here declares that the Gospel is hidden; and the implication is, that it is a thing hidden, as it were, in the night—that there is darkness spread over it; and that it is hidden from men on account of their moral character—on account of their nature. They are blind. He says, "It is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." The truth of the Gospel has so admirable an adaptation to our moral wants, that we should receive it almost spontaneously, it is so admirably fitted to meet a necessity of our being that it would have an irresistible impression upon our moral nature, if it were not that there is something which hinders it. There is some interposition. It is declared here, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." There is darkness thrown between the appearances of the truth in the Gospel of Christ and the receiving faculties of the human soul, "lest

the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

That which the apostles found to be true has been found to be true in every age since, by any that have attempted to teach significantly, and with effect, the pure truths of the Gospel of Christ.

How it is that men are blinded, or what is meant by being blind to truth, may need some illustration.

The impression that a man's reason is a pure intelligence, that it is a simple capacity to know, and that it acts by laws purely of its own, is, I suppose, the popular conception. Men discriminate between the reason and the emotions; and we are accustomed to hear persons speak of the necessity, in order to let the reason have full operation, of suppressing the feelings. We are to discharge, we are told, passion, and prejudice, and feeling of every kind, from the mind, and to look calmly, with a pure, cold reason—for men have an impression that reason is just that. In regard to far the most important sphere of knowledge, however, the truth is, that reason is not competent to discern the truth at all, in and of itself, and is as absolutely dependent upon the influence of feeling for its capacity to discern moral and social truth, as the eye is dependent upon light for its power to discern color, or measure distances. There is no popular fallacy, and no philosophical fallacy, of the schools, more apparent upon reflection and examination than the idea that in order to think well, a man must think coldly. It is to a very great extent true of the lowest sphere of truth—that is, the sphere of physical truth. In pure scientific truth, it may be that the reason is to be discharged of all color, and that no man is to let emotion, passion, prejudice, perception, or anything of the kind, come in to determine, or to modify, or even to influence, the use of his reason. It is the pure action of the intellect upon qualities that lie outside of the man's own consciousness, however, only, in which the reason is capable of discerning in and of its own self. The moment you come from mere physical truths into the realm of human life, and undertake to investigate and determine truths that involve in them character, affection, sentiment; in other words, the moment you begin to speak about the truths of common life—about prudence, justice, kindness, pity, love, hate, fear, or desires of any kind, right or wrong, in all their categories—that moment, I affirm, the understanding ceases to be competent to form any conception, and to come to any just judgment, without the help of the feelings. The intellect cannot discern a truth of justice unless there is a conscience that throws upon it its magnetism, or its color, or whatever you choose to call it. It is impossible for the intellect to form a judgment of a truth of conscience unless it looks upon it in the light of conscience. There can be no purely intellectual judgment of honor.

There must be a sentiment behind the truths of honor, and then the intellect can judge of those truths.

So it is of all the relations of life. The most important truths are those which stand between you and your neighbor—between you and the whole tribe and family of mankind. In social and moral truths lie the life of man; and here are the most important elements of reason. These have constituted immeasurably the most of all that the reason has had to deal with in the history of the human race. And in regard to this large class of truths, pure intellection is foolishness. It is a light shining in the darkness; and the darkness comprehends it not. In regard to all these truths there can be no such thing as an intelligent judgment formed, unless the reason is supplemented and inspired, and to a certain extent guided, by the intuitions of feeling. And these, together, constitute the ability of a man to form just judgments in regard to social and moral truths.

Experience shows that the intellect of man ranges from a very quick sensibility to truths, moral and social, all the way down to stone-blindness. If you take men as they rise in society, you shall find that many—and I think the number increases—are competent to discern truths upon their presentation. They are quick; they are sensitive. You can present to them no truth of justice, none of honor, none of rectitude, none of character, that they do not comprehend instinctively. Their minds are so adjusted, their intellect has been so accustomed to play with their moral feelings, their understanding is so saturated with moral sentiments, that the moment their attention is called to these truths, they are like truisms to them.

From that higher point men grade. You will find some that are competent to judge of certain kinds of truth, and insensitive to all other kinds. You will find other men that are competent to judge of some kinds of truth by an effort, when they strive to come up to them, in their more favored hours, when all their better affections have been roused up, and their worst ones have been put in subjection, but only under such circumstances. In a time of calamity, of affliction, of one or another experience, you will find that men are able to discern moral truths; but not truths that are below these. You will find men who can discern the strongest colors of moral and social truths, but very little besides. Then you will find other men that do not understand these truths at all. It is like casting pearls before swine to tell them about social truths and moral truths. They not only do not understand them, but they do not believe in them. And they turn again and rend you if you preach them.

This describes the condition of men in human society as they actually are on the presentation to them of pure forms of religious truth,

and of the higher forms of social truth. Not only do we see this to be so upon the bare statement, but we act upon it. Men see differently all the time, and we act accordingly.

For instance, a man is solicited to buy some pictures. He has never thought much of pictures himself. He has known that he was getting rich, and has meant by-and-by to live as other folks did; and he has understood that folks that lived well lived with pictures in their houses; and he has expected that the time would come when he should live with pictures in his house. He has learned that having pictures is a part of gentility, and has made up his mind that he will have pictures.

At last the time has come when he has a little more money than he wants in his business, or knows what to do with; and his wife says, "Now buy some pictures;" and his daughters say, "Why don't you, Pa?" and he concludes that he will. A speculator, finding out that he is going to buy pictures, catches him by the elbow, and draws him into a place where there are pictures for sale, and says, "You ought to have these pictures. Look at this one. It is one of the most glorious pictures anywhere to be found. Don't you see?" The man, after looking a moment, says, "I do not exactly like the frame." "Well, but the *picture*," says the speculator—"do you see that?" "The picture may be well enough; but I do not know much about these things. I must get the advice of somebody that knows about pictures."

Here is a class of truths that this man confesses he does not know much about. He looks, and does not see what he looks at. He does not know what to look for. He does not know whether the colors are right or wrong. He does not know whether the forms are according to nature, or a violation of nature. He knows nothing about grouping, or about drapery. He knows nothing about "tone." He looks upon the picture as a mere swab of color all about the canvas. Here is a case in which he is incapable of judging for himself, and he knows it.

Who does he get to judge for him? There is a spider bellied man yonder, in a little hole, whom he has employed whenever he has been "shaving" notes or speculating in paper. His judgment is good in money matters. He is keen as he can be in this direction. His eye glitters like a basilisk's. He is sharp as a razor. He scarcely ever makes a mistake in giving his opinion with regard to financial operations. And the man says to himself, "I think I will go and ask him about pictures." And then, after a moment's thought, he laughs, and says, "What does that old miser know about pictures? He is not the man for me to go to. I must find somebody else." And here is another instance in which a man that is familiar with one kind of truth, does not know much about another.

By-and-by the man thinks of another person, and he says to a friend, "Who is that fellow that failed two or three times—the son of a rich man, who traveled in Europe, and spent a great deal of money on his education, and only succeeded in one thing—making a popinjay of himself? I recollect hearing it said that he had a great taste for pictures." The man hunts up this "fellow," as he calls him, saying to himself, "He has an eye to see what I cannot, and what this old money-maker cannot." They are blind in art, but have good sight in finance; and he has good sight in art, but is blind in finance. They have succeeded on the street, and he has failed on the street.

The man, when he has found this *connoisseur*, says to him, "Go with me and look at some pictures, and give me your judgment about them." So they go to see the pictures that the speculator gave such a glowing account of; and after glancing about the room, the critic says, "Are you going to buy these pictures?" "Well, I do not know. The man recommends them very highly. He says that is a Rembrandt, and wants me to buy it." "A what? A Rembrandt! What does he say that other is?" "That he says is a Rubens." "A Rubens! Look here, my friend, just you come out of this place. Do not you get caught by being persuaded to buy any of these pictures. A man with half an eye can see that they are mere daubs. They are only copies, and miserable copies at that. I would not give twenty shillings for the whole of them."

One of these men is stone blind about pictures; but the other sees them. And men, the moment they want anything done in a direction in which they cannot see, go for advice and help to men who can see in that direction, though they may not be able to see in other directions.

I have not unfrequently been consulted by persons at a distance, as to what they had better do with property. One man writes me that he wants to bestow about two hundred thousand dollars in the establishment of eleemosynary institutions, and that he would like some suggestions as to the best methods of doing it. Suppose, in such a case, I should go to some avaricious hunk, and say to him, "You are a moneyed man, and I want to ask your opinion in a matter involving a large sum. I have a friend in Indiana who wants to invest——" "I would advise him to put it in stocks of the Michigan Central, Rock Island, or something of that sort," says the man. "No," I say, "he wants to invest it in charitable——" "Charitable? What stock is that? I never heard it quoted on the street. I do not believe it was ever known here?" "But stop, my friend; he wants me to give him some information as to how to leave his property so that it will do good after he is dead." "Oh! advise him to leave it to his wife and

children. That is what I mean to do with my property." "He has no wife and no children, sir; and he wants to leave it so that it will take care of the poor and needy." "Well—well—I never thought much about those things. You had better go to a minister or somebody else. I do not understand matters of that kind. I cannot give you any advice on such subjects."

That man has no eye-sight for things of this sort. He does not understand anything about a charitable application of funds. He never thought about it, or felt about it, or cared about it. He does not like to have his attention called to it. When he has been pressed to use some of his superabundant means for benevolent purposes, all that was in him rose up against it, and he pushed it away from him, and would not have anything to do with it.

Take a merry, sharp, good natured, well-to-do, but selfish and unscrupulous lawyer. Go to him in respect to your child. Say to him, "We are living neighbors, and I desire to consult you on a subject which causes me a great deal of unhappiness, and to have you tell me what I am to do. I brought my daughter up meaning her to be, as she is, a splendid creature. She is perfect in music, drawing, and everything that could add to her accomplishments. I have brought her to just the point when I want her to go into society, and she has gone in company only a single winter, and has twenty beaux after her; and now she has fallen in with some of those church folks and got religion. She does not want to dance, or go to balls any more. The education I have given her is thrown away. All that she cares for is to mope with her Bible, and run after rag-tag and bob-tail children. I have talked with her, and coaxed her, and scolded her, but it does no good. She is the plague of my life. She is a dear girl; I cannot help loving her; and I am going to leave her all my property; but I do wish this thing had not happend. And I do not know what to do. I want you to advise me."

The lawyer looks at him, and says, "Then Mary has gone and got religion, has she? Now, I tell you what it is, neighbor, my advice is that you go to the minister, and talk to him. I do not think I am very deep in such things myself. If it were a matter of dispute between you and some neighbor, I would gladly take the case; but as it is a question of religious feeling (whatever that may be) between you and your daughter, I confess I do not know much about it. We do not have much of that sort of thing in courts. You must go to somebody that has more knowledge of such matters."

Would not that be true to nature? Is it not true that many men are blind respecting that class of subjects? You yourself are every single day sorting out men on the principle that some men can see

see some things, and cannot see others; that some men know some things, and do not know others. And when you speak of what a man knows you do not speak of ideas necessarily. Men may know a great deal of mathematics, a great deal of machinery, a great deal of invention, and yet not know that which shall fit them to be your counsellors. There are some things about which, if you question them, you will find that they are all blank. If it were a matter of any delicacy, you would not think of going to them. If it were a matter of courage and strength, you would not think of going to some others. You sort men on the supposition that they are differently developed, and that some can see and some cannot; that some can see some things, and not others; that some can see a little way up, some further up, and some far up. Men recognize this in their daily business; but they do not stop to see that it is part of a great moral problem; that it is a truth exemplified in secular and social life which underlies the whole teaching of the Bible, and has in it the most tremendous issues and consequences.

If we take this average experience of men, or if we take this secular recognition of the fact that men are or may be blind to truths, we perceive how they grow in this direction. They are not so at the beginning, always. It is one of the most melancholy things in the world, that while, usually, the executive part of a man grows sharper and more effective as he advances in life, those things which make his manhood, his noble traits, average worse as he grows older. The effect of the sorrows of the world, of its strifes, its disappointments, its rivalries and collisions; the growth of pride and avarice—these are such that, without the Gospel to hold them back, and sweeten their dispositions, persons ripen poorly, badly, and are seldom as generous, seldom as honorable, seldom as sensitive, seldom as fine in their perceptions, as they were when they were boys and girls. In their executive nature, their force-nature, men gain, and in their higher moral nature I fear they lose, as they advance in life. Let us look at the steps by which they lose.

Men grow blind to moral truth simply by pre-occupation; by having their minds so full of other things, that there is nothing in them that looks or sees. A man goes down through the street so full of thoughts of business that he does not know one man that he meets. A man goes through a long ride, and he is so occupied with his companion, or with his own thoughts, that when he comes back he could not tell you anything about the scenery. He could not tell you whether he has seen any trees, or any birds, or anything else. The trees flitted right before him; the birds sung from the thicket which he was skirting; the flowers exhaled the sweetest perfumes; the farmers were

in the fields plowing, and the crows and blackbirds were following for grubs; and the opening scenes around about him were enough to make a poet half crazy; but he went, through the circuit of a seven or eight miles' ride; and when he returns, and the invalid girl says to him, "Father; is the grass growing?" he says, "What, my child?" "Is the grass growing?" "I do not recollect. I did not think to look." "Well, did you not see any birds while you were out?" Poor thing! there she has lain on the bed for months; her strength is gone, her hands are thin, and white as alabaster; she longs for the country, and says, "Oh! if I could only see the flowers again, and hear the birds sing once more! Father, *were* the birds singing?" "Why, my child, if I had thought you wanted to know, I certainly would have listened." She cannot get anything out of him. His mind was so full of something else, that, though he went through a most beautiful region, where there were countless objects and sounds to delight the eye and the ear, when he gets back home he cannot tell a thing that he has seen or heard, but says, "I have been looking inside all the while."

Suppose that, on one of those paroxysmal days in the Gold Room in New York, while every one of the men there is attempting—with admirable success—to imitate the wildest lunatic, throwing up his hands, and yelling and pitching and striving—suppose that on such a day, a bunch of flowers, the most exquisite, were carried in there and set down, do you suppose they would be noticed? Not a man would see them. Why, those men would be so eaten up by the insane excitement of the hour that they would not see anything, and would hardly hear a thunderbolt if it should break in the midst of them!

Men can be so preoccupied that their minds become quite insusceptible to impressions. This may occur not simply in physical things, but also in social and moral things. A man can take one or two interests in life, and give himself up to them with such absorption, that all the greater truths of life are unheeded by him. Of the spiritual influences that are permeating society; of that which God is doing by his providence; of that which he is doing by the ministry of angels; of what the Holy Ghost is doing in the hearts of men—of these things that are going on from day to day, around about him, he never has a suspicion. He does not see them; he does not believe in them; he does not understand them when he hears others talking about them, his mind is so perfectly filled with secular affairs.

People often say of such a man, "He is a good sort of person. I never heard that he did any harm." Did you ever hear that he did any good? He is entirely absorbed in one or two secular things. His whole life beats in those one or two things.

The process of blindness to spiritual things may grow in a man, too,

by the principle of elective affinity. Men feed on that which they hunger for, morally, and socially, and intellectually. They seek the qualities in life which they desire. When, therefore, one class of men go down the street for business, they see only the side of life which pertains to business. When another class go down the street for gayety, they see only the sides of life that reflect gayety. One class of men, going down the street, think only of men; for they are managers of men. Another class think of customers; their business is to gather and to keep customers. Another class think of companions; they are seekers and lovers of pleasure more than anything else. That which is strong in men absorbs their attention. The strongest passion or feeling in them controls. And by this principle of elective affinity they seek out that in life which they most desire.

That is the principle on which men read the Bible. If a man is intensely conscientious, he reads the Bible so as to gather out all the conscience element there is in it. The love element will not touch him. He will go over that and not see any of it. To him the Bible will seem to be one long series of conscience-propositions. Another man, who has very little conscience, but who has a great deal of veneration; a man in whom the worshipping instinct is strong, will go through the Bible and glean out all that appeals to that predominant quality of his nature. Another man, whose predominant feeling is love, as he goes through the Bible, will see no conscience, and no veneration, but will be struck with the love principle, and will glean that all out.

And men do just so by life. They glean out of it the things to which they are attracted by elective affinity. Those are the things which they see; and to everything else they are indifferent and blind.

Men become blind to the truth, also, by nourishing passions which are antagonistic to it. Every one knows by his own experience that there are some states of mind which preclude others. If a man is angry, he cannot be mirthful, or if he is mirthful he cannot be angry, at the same time. The mind is apparently made with antagonistic passions; and if one is in ascendancy, its opposite is in depression, always. And that is the secret of discipline, if people only knew it. When your child is furiously angry, and you wish, without chastisement, to make him good-natured, if you can present that which is ludicrous to him so as to make him laugh, you will see the point at which the anger strives and bubbles and foams, and the point at which, finally the laugh gets the upper-hand, and the anger goes down. This is a trick of the nursery. Children play it on each other. And this principle is important—namely, that the feelings move at opposite poles, and that if one is in ascendancy, the other will be in depression. You cannot have destructiveness and benevolence dominant at the

same time. One puts the other down, or is put down by it. And so it is in the whole realm of the human mind.

Now, no man can be saturated with pride, and have any discernment of those spiritual truths which turn on humility. No man can be filled with sensuous passions from day to day, and yet know anything about the truths of disinterestedness, and pure, true, spiritual friendship. No man can live from day to day in the spirit of self-indulgence, and yet have any conception of what Christ meant when he said, "Take up my cross, and follow me, daily." No man can live in a grasping selfishness, and yet have any conception of affluent benevolence. Where men live in the indulgence of the lower passions of their nature, it is impossible for them to see any truths except those which are colored by those passions. I had almost said that they are a mechanical obstruction. Certain it is, that no mechanical obstruction could be more effectual than this moral obstruction. In the very nature of things, where lower passions fill the mind, men are blind to higher moral elements.

By habit this may become a second nature—and it actually does. Men grow away from the power of seeing things. Men grow away from art. Men's eyes grow less sensitive and less delicate. They come to know less and less about proportion; less and less about those elements which are constituents of art. And so, men grow away from household purity. They are not so good boys as they were little children. They are not so good young men as they were boys. They are not so good in middle life as they were when they were young men. They are in old age worse than they were in middle life. That is the history of hundreds and thousands. And men grow away from moral feeling. It never, perhaps, was very strong; but it grows less and less declared—less and less effectual. What by pre-supposition, what by elective affinity for other things, and what by the antagonistic influence of the basilar passions, they come to have less sensibility to moral truth. They begin to call it an *ism*, an *abstraction*, or *metaphysics*, and often deride it, and say, "It is not practical; it does not belong to common life and common sense."

That was the apostle's experience in carrying forth the story of Christ. There is something very touching to my mind when I think what Christ was to the apostle. Is there anything that is so innocent, is there anything that is such a mark of simplicity, as the ingenuous conduct of a young lover? He is twenty-two years old. He has a fine heart, a real noble nature. He has at last fallen upon one of God's angels. He tells you so, with great simplicity. There never was such another—for so the young lover always thinks. She is a perfect being—a thing which every lover finds to be the case at first. He makes me

his confident; and says, "I wish you could know her." I have known plenty of others that were equal to her in every way. But he thinks this is a special case. "Oh, Mr. Beecher! I want you to look at her picture." He takes it out and shows it to me. It is an amiable, pretty face; but I have seen five hundred just like it. I would not, of course, hurt his feelings by telling him so; but it is the fact. He goes on to descant upon her beauty. He says, "Knowing her has made another man of me. It has caused me to live differently. It has cleansed my conscience. It has inspired my industry. It has filled full all the better parts of my life. I am determined to be a noble man. I am going to be worthy of this woman."

Oh! do not tell me that the widow's only son buried, is the saddest sight in life. Do not tell me that the first-born child plucked out of the mother's arms, and laid under the flowers and under the turf, is the saddest sight. To see that young man, before one year is gone by, in an agony of despair, bury his trust and faith; to see his heart, after it has touched its most generous mood, fall, like a star from heaven, into darkness and despondency and unfaith—that is the bitterest thing in this world. To lose faith in love; to lose faith in disinterested friendship; to lose faith in that which you thought stood nearest to God and nearest to you—that is the saddest thing in this world.

Paul seems to me just like such a young man, only he never lost his faith; only he is like those more fortunate ones who, having discovered something that they thought to be perfect, have found it to grow better and better in after years. For there are people who are just like flowers that blossom only once—that blossom early in spring, and carry their leaves wilted and ragged all through the summer; and there are persons who are like the morning glory, that begins to blossom early, and does not forget it till the very frost of winter cuts it down. There is bloom upon bloom, morning after morning, and each one is as fair and as fairy-like as if there had never been another.

Paul went forth feeling that he had found a Lover. The old pharisee; the proud, stiff-necked Jew; the man that was cruel in his conscientiousness; the man who, for the sake of making another man believe right, took him by the throat and hurled him into the fire—he had a view of Jesus Christ that gave him such a conception of God, such an idea of love, such a sense of character, as became to him, oh! what a power! When once he had taken it in it filled his soul with light. And he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." It was he that could say, afterward, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." It was he that could declare that by faith he rejoiced in infirmities and tribulations. It was he that

could say, "My life is hid with Christ in God." It was he that could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me." Paul went round with this Christ—this lover Christ—this Christ with whom he was in love, who was all to him in heaven, and who was the center and embodiment of every conceivable excellence, in God, in angels, and in men. This Christ he preached. His soul was thrilled by him.

If you read Paul's letters, you will see that, although he was a man of an intensely logical mind, never did the name of Christ come up in the midst of an argument, that it did not shatter that argument to fragments. Never did it burst in upon him, that he did not have to stop and unfold Christ's character, and express his adoration for him, before he could get his own leave to go on with his argument. And there never was a more ragged arguer than his New Testament writings show him to have been. And that is the peculiarity of the Bible. No man knows how to read the Bible who does not understand the exploration of sudden emotions of love in the midst of logic; who does not understand the deflections it makes.

Paul went out to preach this Christ, that made him tingle from head to foot; and men listened; and some said, "What will this babblers say?" and others said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange Gods;" and philosophers listened with a leaden and half-curious ear, and forgot what he had said before they left the spot. To be sure, there was one widow out by the river who heard it gladly; and here and there a poor servant or slave accepted it; but after years and years of labor he said, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." And yet, there was living in his imagination, and glowing in his heart, a radiant and transcendent image of beauty—the most glorious conception that could fire the heart of man, exalting it, elevating it, comforting it, and promising it joy in the life that now is and in that which is to come. And when he preached it in Athens, he got nothing; when he preached it in Corinth he got a handful; when he preached it in Asia Minor, he gleaned a few here, and a few there; but the great mass of men were clamoring on. The god of this world had blinded them so that they could not see the truth, and the beauty, and the joy, and the glory, which there was in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that which was the experience of Paul, is the experience of every man whose own soul has ever been made enthusiastic by the love of the Saviour. When he attempts to preach Christ to men, the conviction which he looks for in them does not exist. The sentiments which he expresses find no echo in their bosom. The rapture and zeal which he feels, meet with no response from them. They are preoccupied. And it is this fact that makes them blind to these things. They are engrossed with other things which they like better, and that makes them blind. They are under the dominion of those coarser passions which are antagonistic to any such feelings as these. And thus, from every side, and for every reason, men are blind, so that they hear the Gospel preached, and are told what Christ is, and see men rejoicing in Him, almost without any sympathy whatever.

And so it comes to pass that the whole of human life—its industry, its civic economy, its social fabric, which was meant to be a grand means of grace, training men not only to outward thrift, but through this, to a nobler reason and spirituality—it comes to pass that these things, instead of promoting the objects for which men were created, are making them carnal, secular. This world, which was meant to be a symbolization of the other life, becomes a curtain, and hangs before that life, and shuts out the light of it. All the processes of society and nature that were meant to teach us of God; all the economic forces that exist among men; all the sweet relationships of social life, in father and mother, and brother and sister, and friend and neighbor, which were meant to be so many teachers of the various inflections of life, designed to give us some conception of the nature and disposition of the great Father in Heaven—these things are perverted to wrong uses and made to teach men falseness, to hide the truth from them, and to render them blind to those things which above all others they ought to see.

Men thus go on exerting the whole force of their life in producing moral deformities. Dwarfs are usually not simply smaller than other men, but deformed. The hands and the feet will perhaps be enormously large, and the body and legs and arms excessively small. No person takes pleasure in looking at a deformity of the body. It is a painful sight for any one to behold. Men sometimes shrink with irremediable shudderings from each others physical deformities. And yet you are so familiar with deformity within, that you can without shrinking or experiencing any pain, see men destroy their whole moral nature, or leave it almost ungrown, the hands and feet by which they work and walk in this world being, like those of the dwarf, overgrown; but conscience, and veneration, and faith, and hope, and love, and sweet divine sympathy, being almost in the bud, scarcely unrolled, and not at all devel-

oped. Men are living so as to dwarf themselves in their higher nature; and when they come to the hour of death they will not be able to carry out with them that for which they have given their whole life. The thing that men work for, and sacrifice everything for, in this world, is that which they cannot carry one step beyond the grave. And their better nature, which they have cramped, and crippled, and deformed, and destroyed, and sacrificed, is the only part which they can take out of life with them. Having made themselves morally hideous for the sake of earthly things, they leave all those earthly things behind them at death, and take with them moral crippings, moral hideousness, moral deformity, into the other life; into that profound mystery of the future; into that great void—no, into that land of joys and of woes; into that land which no human thought can fathom.

In the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, there are chasms into which one may throw stones, and listen, and listen, and listen, and hear no answer. So deep are they that no sound returns.

Men stand on the verge of the eternal world, and throw over their questions, and listen, and listen, and no answer comes back. Nor do we know anything about that world, except that Jesus, who came from it—Jesus the pure, the serene, the sweet, the gentle—said, "These shall go away into everlasting life, and those into everlasting punishment." That is all we know—just this simple separation of the bad from the good forever, in the world that is to come. And we take the mighty enginery of this world; we take all its forces, and all its incitements, and all its treasures, the whole royalty of its wealth, to cripple and destroy that part of ourselves which is to go out of this life; and all the things that we have lived for we shall leave behind. And so, having been blind all the way through life, we go to be blind in the land of darkness beyond.

My dear friends, is not this true, to your own personal knowledge? All you that have not been enlightened by the saving power of the Holy Ghost, all you that have not felt the power of the truth as set home by the Spirit of the living God, is it not true that you are blinded—blinded to the love of Christ; blinded to the sacrifice of Christ; blinded to your obligations to Christ? Are you not blind to the great economy of truth that is going on silently, solemnly, and surely above your heads, and around about you?

All the earth is moving. The Lord God, who sits regent, is not deterred by philosophy. His cause goes forward, in the church, and out of the church; by ministers, and in spite of ministers; with skeptical philosophies, and with faith running to the other extreme. Under all circumstances, the great Kingdom of God—the kingdom of reason, the kingdom of justice, the kingdom of truth and sympathy, the king-

dom of love and gladness, the kingdom of purity—is gaining ground. It is growing stronger and stronger in all the earth. Selfishness does not stop it; and all man's pride, foaming out against it, does not stop it.

Since the sun has begun to come back, who can stop the growing day? Who now can make the hours dark that the sun is making light? It lingers longer in the west, and comes up earlier in the east, and the day is growing. And let the north blow out its puffs of ice as much as it will; let the snow come as much as it will, they cannot keep the summer off. It is coming. It is advancing through the air. I hear the birds coming. I smell the flowers, blooming. From far southern latitudes the sun is advancing. The summer will be here before long.

And so, he that is the Sun of Righteousness is bringing in the summer-day of redemption; and all men's belief and wickedness and foaming passions may set themselves against it, but it comes through the air. It comes through the ages. It comes by the mighty power of the omnipotent God. And no man shall stop it. The day will yet come when it shall be triumphant over all. And you shall see it—some of you in sympathy and rejoicing; and some of you, I fear, on the other side, on the left, with scowling sadness. Woe be to those that are not on the Lord's side when he comes in the day of his power, to execute final justice and judgment!

May God grant, when Christ is proclaimed to you, now, to-day, that you may wipe away the films from your eyes, and throw away those passions that hide the light of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and that you may rise up and call yourselves the sons of light, and begin to see, to love, to trust, to follow, that you may finally reign, with exceeding great joy, in your Father's Kingdom.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, Almighty God, that thou hast made thyself known to us in the world which thou hast created; but more especially do we rejoice that thou hast recorded thy truth and thy government by the word of holy men that spake of old as they were moved by thy Spirit, and that thou hast gathered up and garnered those ripest and best experiences of men under thy care, and made them our models and our guides. We thank thee that in the fulness of times all other truth is surpassed in fullness and gloriousness by the revelation of thyself in Jesus Christ. Through him we now discern the truth of the living God, no longer afar off; no longer hid under forms of dread authority; no longer clothed with power and with faith ministered unto all that fear. We are brought near, now, by love. We behold the face of our Father which is in heaven. We are in sympathy with thee. Thou comest for us, and dost wait upon our weakness. Thou dost forget our transgression, and thy chastisement is a healing. Whom thou lovest thou chastenest, and scourgest the sons whom thou receivest. And now we behold thy blessed Spirit, enlightening, comforting, guiding, inspiring, all abroad throughout the earth. Whatever is good, or aspires toward goodness, is helped by thy Spirit; and the blind are led in a way which they knew not of, and the poor are made rich in a way that they sought not, and those that are out of the way are found of Him who goes to seek and to save the lost. Thou art filling the world and time with the sweet influences of thy nature; and this earth that began far away from thee, and hast wallowed in savageness, thou art through the ages ameliorating, building up into righteousness, bringing nearer and nearer, and filling with thy Spirit. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. To us how slow is the work! but thou dwellest in eternity, and thou art not hurried, as our steps are that must fall fast or ever life and its light are gone. Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may have faith to believe that that is best done, though it takes many generations of our lives, measured upon the scale of thine own greatness. Grant that we may learn to be patient, and not to doubt, and not to fear the progress of thy work in this world. Thou hast sown the seed; thou wilt reap the harvest. Thou hast begun the work, so different from our conceptions, so full to us, yet, of darkness and mystery; but thou wilt complete it in righteousness. And the heavens shall praise thee; and all shall rejoice before thee that see thy goodness and thy wisdom, and all the marvels of it in time. Grant, we pray thee, that we may be of that blessed number who yet shall stand at thy right hand, to see thee cleared, and the way of righteousness made plain, and God vindicated in the eyes of all the universe, that he has been just and true and merciful. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may not be among those that harden their hearts, that blind their eyes, that stop their ears, that refuse to love thee, and are turned away as thine enemies, and are not permitted to enter into thy glory. Grant, we pray thee, O Lord, that we may be among that blessed band who love the Saviour, and who by love are transformed into his image, and are led by his hand, step by step, up to all the heights of glory. For the time we should be teachers; and yet, we have need to learn what are the first principles. We should have gone on unto perfection, not stopping to lay again the foundation. Alas! that we linger; that our victories are so inconclusive; that our battles are fought over and over and over again.

Lord Jesus, grant that we may have such a quickening influence, such an indwelling of thy power, that we may be able to defeat thine enemies and ours, so that they shall be utterly destroyed, and that their dominion over us shall cease. Lead us to higher and higher attainments in the Christian life. Grant that our own souls may become so transformed by the multiform working of love, that we shall discern more beauty in thee, and more wondrous excellencies in thy law, and in the life of true Christian faith. May it be granted to us to discern the truths that are within the veil, and to live above the senses, in that invisible realm of holy thoughts, and pure affections, and noble aspirations; in that realm where thou thyself dost dwell.

And grant, we pray thee, that all hindrances may be taken away. Take away from us all known sins; all things that limit and hinder the conscience; all things that sully it; all things that diminish the power of affection; all things that make us proud and

selfish and worldly. And may we seek to prepare our hearts so that they shall be guest-chambers for thine indwelling. And come, O thou best Friend, Jesus, Son of God, and very God—come to us with all thy power of love, of light, of gentleness, of patience, of goodness. Work mightily in us, until everything that is offensive to thee is subdued; until all the passages of our nature are cleansed; until our sins are taken away, and all things are made pure and sweet before thee. So grant that thy work may abound in every one of us. And may we strive thereto, and watch therefor, from day to day, living as in the sight of that blessed vision which cannot be far from any of us, and which is near, very near, to some of us. Grant, O Lord, our God, that we may begin to feel the drawing of that world toward which we go; and may we more and more look away from the things that are seen, unto the things that are invisible. More and more may we measure the things with which we dwell from day to day, not by the estimate of men, nor by their worldly value, but by their relations to our immortality, and to the thought of God, and to the opinion of those that are to be our companions in heaven.

And grant, we pray thee, that our households may be sanctified. May our intercourse glow more with true Christian love and faithfulness toward one another; and may we be bound together in the blessed bond and fellowship of a common faith, and learn to bear one another's burdens; learn to love one another; learn to desire one another's welfare as much as our own; and in honor to prefer one another.

And grant that this Church may be filled with thy presence, and be an honor and glory to thy name. And we pray that thou wilt bless all thy churches of every name. May the truth more and more abound in them. May the things which hinder their usefulness be taken out of the way. May there prevail a co-operative zeal in all the sects of thy one church upon earth. Let thy kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness come among all nations. Overturn oppression everywhere. Destroy ignorance, which is the mother thereof. Grant that men may be delivered from the bond of superstition. And may men grow up more and more into a manhood pure and full of goodness. May all the earth at last see thy salvation.

Which we ask in the adorable name of Jesus, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thy blessing may rest upon the word which has been spoken. Thou hast wrought in the greatness of thy strength as one that traveled alone in the wilderness of time. From thee has come all the strength that men have had. And martyrs, and holy men, and apostles, and confessors, have been filled with thy light. Borrowed it was, and their strength has been but something of thine. Thou only hast been strong; thou only hast been patient—thou that art upholding the heavens; thou that art ransoming the earth. Grant, O Lord God! that man's opposition may be laid aside. Oh! come again to give sight to the blind, thou that didst heal them when upon earth. Touch the hearts of men, and bring them to life, thou that didst raise the dead. Grant, O Lord Jesus, that there may be those this morning who shall see that life is going ill with them; that their habits are engrossing them; that they are losing more and more the sensibility of things sweet and pure and true and elevating. And grant that they may search their hearts, and see how they are leading lives of resistance to God; how they turn themselves away from the law of spirituality; how they are not obedient to it, neither indeed can be. Grant, we pray thee, that there may be heart-searchings among all of us. May we know whether we are children of God or not; whether Christ is precious to us or not; whether or not we are following him earnestly, and longing more and more for the fulfillment of his will in us. May our houses be set in order. May all that we have to do in life be done quickly. The day is coming. The summons is out. Already thy messengers are on the wing for some of us. Oh! grant that we may not be caught asleep, or unprepared. And when the summons comes, and we are called to go, oh! grant though it may seem to those behind as the setting of our sun, it may seem to us as the rising of our everlasting day. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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